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## CONCEPT, CONSIDERATIONS AND CREATIVITY Designing and Making Textiles for the Contract Industry

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## **CONCEPT, CONSIDERATIONS AND CREATIVITY**

### **Designing and Making Textiles for the Contract Industry**

presented by Elizabeth Whelan

Designing fabrics for the contract marketplace is more than just applying artistic and technical expertise to the medium. Textiles are often created and made with specific products in mind, such as furniture, panel fabrics, drapery, healthcare fabrics, and wallcovering. In addition to making fabrics that suit a particular function, the textiles also need to perform under basic industry guidelines and appeal to various aesthetic standards. The aesthetic standard is determined by market forces that comprise of a diverse customer base: architects, interior designers, facilities managers, and other product makers such as office furniture makers. American textile jobbers sell to this customer base. Approximately 75 to 100 mills worldwide compete for business with the American textile jobbers, which distribute their products internationally. How does the creative process work in tandem with manufacturing capabilities and market forces? What makes a textile design successful? What is the role of a specified pattern in the larger context of an architectural project, facility renovation or office furniture's market? How does a textile designer manage all these facets of information, create an outstanding design that can be manufactured, while also building her creative vision?

The focus of the presentation will be about the process of creating and making textiles for the contract market, and the factors a designer must know, consider, and handle. The perspective is from a designer that works for both manufacturers and jobbers for this specific marketplace. Aesthetic issues, technological and manufacturing factors, market forces and cultural imperatives are important considerations that directly affect this process of creating and making. The presentation will examine these considerations from a creative and manufacturing point of view, but with the understanding of the jobber, specifier and end user's need.

Elizabeth Whelan is the founder and principle of Elizabeth Whelan Design, a textile design firm specializing in creating constructed textiles for both manufacturers and jobbers to be sold in the contract, residential and apparel markets. Prior to starting Elizabeth Whelan Design, Ms. Whelan was Creative Director at Raxon Fabrics, a mill specializing in woven upholstery fabrics for the contract market. She was also Associate Designer at DesignTex. Ms. Whelan has a degree in History from Trinity College in Washington D.C. She is also a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, where she earned a B.F.A. in Textile Design. While at RISD, Ms. Whelan was awarded the Textron Fellowship. Her work has placed in both national and international competitions. She is an adjunct faculty member of the Textile Design Department at Parsons School of Design, and lives in New York City.